

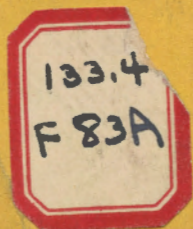
Account of the life.

Character of

Rev. Samuel Parri's

by

Samuel P. Fowler



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ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
LIFE, CHARACTER, &c.,  
OF THE  
REV. SAMUEL PARRIS,  
OF SALEM VILLAGE,  
AND OF HIS CONNECTION WITH THE  
WITCHCRAFT DELUSION OF 1692.

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Read before the Essex Institute, Nov'r 14, 1856.

BY SAMUEL P. FOWLER.

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REV. SAMUEL PARRIS,  
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BY SAMUEL P. FOWLER.

Mr. Parris, whose history is so intimately connected with the Salem Witchcraft delusion of 1692, was a son of Thomas Parris of London, and was born in 1653. He was a member of Harvard College, but did not graduate at that Institution. He was at first a merchant in Boston, but not succeeding in business he left it, and offered himself as a candidate for the ministry.\*

The people at Salem Village, being without a pastor, on the 15th of November, 1688, sent a committee, consisting of three persons, viz: Captain John Putnam, Mr. Joshua Rea, sen., and Francis Nurse, "to treat with Mr. Parris about taking ministerial office." Nothing was done however at this meeting towards effecting a settlement, and on the 25th of November, after the services in the afternoon, the audience was stayed, and by a general vote, requested Mr. Parris to take office. On the 10th of December, 1688, the brethren of the church, sent Lieut. Nath'l Putnam, Sergeant Fuller, Mr. Joshua Rea, sen., and Sergeant Ingersoll, who came, they said, "as messengers to know whether Mr. Parris would accept of office." He replied, "ye work was weighty, they should know in due time." After this, several came on like errands, but as yet, no proposals of maintenance were tendered.

On the 29th of April, 1689, Deacons Nath'l Ingersoll and Edward Putnam, Daniel Rea, Thomas Fuller jr., and John

\* "Any Person, who knew Mr. Samuel Parris formerly of Barbadoes, afterwards of Boston, in New-England, Merchant, and after that, Minister of Salem Village, &c., deceas'd, to be a son of Thomas Parris. of the Island afore said, Esqr,—who deceas'd 1673, or sole Heir by Will to his Estate in said Island,—are desired to give or send notice thereof to the Printer of this Paper; and it shall be for their advantage."

[*Boston News-Letter*, No. 1433, July 15th, 1731.]

hastily came to Mr. Parris, from the meeting house, where there had been a general meeting of the inhabitants, and said, "being the aged men had had the matter of Mr. Parris's settlement so long in hand, and effected nothing, they were desirous to try what the younger could do. Upon Mr. Parris's asking them what their will was, they answered "they were sent, by ye people to desire him to take office, and had concluded to offer him sixty pounds for his salary." Twenty pounds of which, was to be in money, and the remainder as follows: Wheat at 4 shillings per bushel, Indian Corn at 2 shillings per bushel, Barley, Rye and Malt at 3 shillings per bushel, Pork at 2 pence per. pound, Beef at  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pence per. pound.

The committee being desirous of a speedy answer, Mr. Parris informed them, that he would accept of their proposals, provided they would comply with the following provisions for his maintenance: 1st, "When money shall be more plenteous, the money part to be paid me, shall accordingly be increased. 2d, Tho' Corn or like provisions should arise to a higher price than you have set, yet for my own family use, I shall have what is needful, at ye price now stated; and so if it fall lower. 3d, The whole sixty pounds to be only from our inhabitants, that are dwelling in our bounds, or proportionable to what lands they have, within ye same. 4th, No provision to be brought in, without just asking whether needed, and myself to make choice of what, unless ye person is unable to pay in any sort but one. 5th, Fire wood to be given in yearly freely. 6th, Two men to be chosen yearly to see that due payments be made. 7th, Contributions each sabbath in papers, and only such as are in papers, and dwelling within in our bounds, to be accounted as part of the sixty pounds. 8th, As God shall please to bless ye place, so as to be able to rise higher, than ye said sixty pounds, that then a proportionable increase be made. If God shall please for our sins to diminish the substance of said place, I will endeavour accordingly to bear such losses, by proportionable abatements of such as shall reasonably desire it."

These proposals of Mr. Parris to the committee were read to them and accepted, and they expressed their belief, that the inhabitants would approve of them. But it would seem that at a meeting of the people of the village, May 17th, 1689, Mr. Parris was sent for, when objections were made against the 5th and 7th provisions of his settlement. "Touching the 5th it was objected, they had no commons, and therefore could not conveniently give in fire wood, because some must bring in  $\frac{1}{2}$  cord, others more, others less, &c. Therefore they would allow six pounds per annum, one third money, which would buy 80 cords,



as they had dealt by former ministers. Parris replied he was willing to ease them, but then he desired, that one of them would take the six pounds annually, and furnish him with 30 cords of wood, to which proposal he found none of them willing to consent. He then told them, if he did accept the six pounds, it might in time be insufficient to purchase six cords of wood. In reply to the fears of Parris in regard to the rise of the price of wood, he say's, I had a general answer from many that at 4 shillings per cord, I should be supplied during my life among them. He continues, after much urging, I replied I would try them for one year. Mr. Parris says, "touching his 7th provision, nothing at the time was said or objected against contributions by papers, for it had been their former usual way, but only against those, that dwelled within their bounds, they urging that some did not live within their bounds, yet they were constant hearers, and therefore it was meet to have their help.

In fine, after much agitation here, it was agreed on my part and theirs, that such out persons had liberty to please themselves, in paying to the minister or the meeting house. And so I left them, fully acquiescing with my aforesaid conditions, not doubting but that they had truly entered it on the records, as I took for granted, nor heard any thing otherwise, till after my ordination a good while, in another public meeting of ye village; when another vote, recorded and read, vastly different from the agreement, as above said—which I then openly did, and still must deny, to be any contract of mine."

We have now presented Mr. Parris's account, of the transactions between himself and the people of Salem Village, in regard to his settlement. This was drawn up by him, and used upon his trial before the Court of Common Pleas at Ipswich in 1696-7. We have been thus particular in relation to the settlement of Mr. Parris at Salem Village, it being one of the causes, which led to the most bitter parochial quarrel, that ever existed in New-England, and in the opinion of some persons, was the chief or primary cause of that world-wide famous delusion, the Salem Witchcraft.

Salem Village, now embraced in the parish of Rev. Dr. Mil-ton P. Braman, in Danvers, Massachusetts, was, on the 19th of November, 1689 (when the Rev. Samuel Parris entered upon his duties there as a Pastor and Teacher,) a small hamlet or village, inhabited principally by farmers, but embracing within its limits, much adjoining territory, extending its lines to Wills Hill, now Middleton, there being many families who attended worship at Salem Village. The number of rateable polls in the parish were 100. It appears, from the records,

that Mr. Parris presented to his church, upon his settlement, a new covenant and form of admission for its members, together with the question, who were the proper subjects of baptism. These caused some debate in the Church, but none opposed the final action upon them. Some singular and unusual cases of discipline came before them, but they appeared to have been disposed of peaceably. It was not until the 8th of October, 1691, that we discover any unfriendly feeling, existing between Mr. Parris and his people. It was on that day, he says in his church records,—“Being my Lecture day after public service was ended, I was so bare of fire wood, that I was forced publicly to desire the inhabitants to take care that I might be provided for, telling them, had it not been for Mr. Corwin (who had brought wood, being here at my house). I should hardly have had any to burn. Upon the pastor’s informing the church of his destitution of fire wood, the brethren raised a committee, who were instructed to see the town committee, and desire them to make a rate for the minister. The committee on rates met November 10th, 1691, and reported that they did not see good cause to take notice of the church committee, without they had a letter to show, under the church and pastor’s hand. Upon this, Mr. Parris complained of the treatment of the committee towards him, but more especially the church, whom he said manifested an indifference in this affair. The committee, whose business it was to raise a tax to procure the pastor’s wood, still continuing to refuse to do it, on the 27th of December, 1691, a petition was sent to the Quarter Sessions, wherein the petitioners complain, that “no reparations of the Village Meeting House has been for a great while regarded, so that broken windows, stopt up some of them by boards or otherwise, and others wide open, and is sometimes so dark, that it is almost *unuseful*.” The Court, upon this petition, appointed a meeting of the inhabitants of the Village, to choose a new committee to meet on the 25th of January, 1692, for the purpose of assessing rates to repair the meeting house, and procure the pastor’s wood. The inhabitants of the Village met on that day, and made choice of Joseph Pope, Joseph Holten, jr., John Tarbell, Thomas Preston, and James Smith, as their committee.

This is the last we hear about this affair of procuring wood, &c., probably all further considerations of it was absorbed in the great witchcraft delusion, which was now close at hand, and about to break forth.

We are now brought to the period of the commencement of Salem Witchcraft, as it first developed itself in the family of Samuel Parris, Minister at Salem Village in 1692.



Mr. Parris's household consisted, at this time, of himself and wife, his age being 39 years, that of his wife 44 years, a daughter Elizabeth, aged nine years, a niece of eleven years by the name of Abigail Williams, and two servants named John Indian, and Tituba his wife, both natives of South America, then called New Spain. These were held as slaves, and Parris probably came in possession of them, in some of his commercial transactions. By some persons, these Indians have been supposed to belong to the aborigines of our country and to have obtained their knowledge of witchcraft from the Indian powows; but this appears to have been a mistake. Mr. Parris's nearest neighbors were Capt. Jona. Walcut, who had a daughter called Mary, 17 years of age, and his parish clerk, Thomas Putnam, who had a daughter named Ann, aged 12 years, and a servant girl, living with him, named Mercey Lewis aged 17 years, Mary Warren, aged 20 years, lived with John Proctor, Elizabeth Booth, aged 18 years, lived near to John Proctor, Sarah Churchill, aged 20 years, lived in the family of Geo. Jacobs, sen., Susannah Sheldon, aged 18 years, lived in the Village. These girls, together with Abigail Williams, a niece of Mr. Parris, aged 11 years, were in the habit of meeting in a circle in the village, to practice palmistry, fortune telling, &c. It appears by evidence, given at the Courts, that some of their parents and guardians did not approve of these meetings. Mary Warren, one of the most violent of the accusing girls, lived as we have before said, with John Proctor, and at last became his principal accuser, upon his examination for witchcraft. Proctor, out of all patience with the meetings of the girls, composing this circle, one day said he "was a going to the Village to bring Mary Warren, the jade, home; for, if let alone, these girls would make us all *Devils and Witches together quickley*. They should rather be had to the whipping post; but he would fetch his jade home, and thrash the devil out of her." Proctor said, when Mary Warren was first taken with fits, he kept her close to the wheel, and threatened to thrash her, and then she had no more fits; but the next day, he being gone from home, she had her fits again. If the accusing girls had been dealt with as John Proctor would have had them, we probably should have had a short story to tell, about Salem Witchcraft. It is at the meeting of this circle of eight girls, for the purpose of practising palmistry and fortune telling, that we discover the germ, or the first origin of the delusion. We have endeavored to follow them after the excitement had subsided, for the purpose of ascertaining their character, in after life. One only of this circle, Ann Putnam, confessed her folly, and sought forgiveness.

Some of them grew up licentious in their habits, and all of them appear to have sought obscurity. Their whole course, as seen in their depositions, discloses much malignancy, and their ignorance was so great, that of the eight accusing girls, six of them signed their names with a cross.

It was in the latter end of February, 1692, that the daughter of Mr. Parris, named Elizabeth, aged 9 years, together with his niece, Abigail Williams, aged 12 years, were taken sick and received such attention from Mrs. Parris as their case seemed to require. But growing worse under her treatment, and not being able to ascertain what their disease was, application was made to their family physician, Dr. Gregg, living in the Village. He visited them, and observed that they were afflicted with a sad distemper, the name of which he could not tell. Other physicians were called in, in consultation, when one of them gave it as his opinion, that the children were under an evil hand. It is probable that it was Dr. Gregg that supposed the girls bewitched, for he had expressed the same opinion of many of his patients when he could not understand their disease, many times before. It is highly probable that the opinion of these physicians went far to form the belief of not only Parris, but also of his ministerial friends, in the existence of witchcraft in the village. Mr. Parris appears to have been much astonished, when the physicians informed him, that his daughter and niece were, no doubt, under an evil hand. There is evidence that Mr. Parris endeavored to keep the opinion of the physicians a secret, at least, till he could determine what course to pursue. At this time, Mary Sibley, a member of his church, gave directions to John Indian how to find out, who bewitched Betsy Parris and Nabby Williams. This was done without the knowledge of Parris. The means used to make this discovery, was to make a cake of rye meal, with the urine of the children, and bake it in the ashes, and give it to a dog to eat. Similar disgusting practices appear to have been used to discover and kill witches, during the whole period of the delusion.

On the 27th of March, 1692, Mr Parris called together his church, when he presented testimony against the error of sister Mary Sibley, in giving direction to John Indian in an unwarrantable way, to find out witches. Upon Mary Sibley's manifesting sorrow and grief for her conduct, the brethren of the church received satisfaction. By the diabolical means thus used by Mary Sibley, Mr. Parris supposed the devil had been raised, and seeing the apparent distressed condition of his family, and not knowing what course to pursue, requested some



worthy gentlemen of Salem, and some neighboring ministers to consult together at his house; who when they came, and had inquired diligently into the sufferings of the afflicted, concluded they were preternatural, and feared the hand of Satan was in them. The advice given to Parris by them was, that he should sit still and wait upon the Providence of God, to see what time might discover; and to be much in prayer for the discovery of what was yet secret. They also examined Tituba, who confessed the making a cake, and said her mistress in her own country was a witch, and had taught her some means to be used for the discovery of a witch, and for the prevention of being bewitched, &c. But said she herself, was not a witch. Soon after this, there were two or three private fasts at Parris's house, one of which was kept by the neighboring ministers, and another in public at the village. And one general fast, by order of the General Court, observed throughout the Colony, to seek the Lord, that he would rebuke Satan, and be a light unto his people in this day of darkness.

It is evident from the account given by Rev. John Hale, who was an eye witness to many of the transactions at Salem village, and one of the ministers called for consultation, that Mr. Parris proceeded with caution at the commencement of the troubles, and was anxious to seek council and advice. He likewise wished to inform himself on the subject of witchcraft, and for that purpose received as a loan from Dea. Robert Sanderson, of Boston, a copy of Perkins' works, which treated upon that subject.

We are among those who believe Mr. Parris was honest in his belief in witchcraft, and that he was not moved in this affair by personal malice, or the desire to promote the cause of religion in his Parish, as has been supposed by the author of the History of Danvers. We have not as yet, found a particle of evidence, that he entertained ill will against those who were accused and executed.

Mr. Parris, in common with his ministerial brethren, appears to have come, after the confession of Tituba, to the full conclusion, that witchcraft had broken out in his Parish, and that the Devil had commenced his operations in his own family; and as a faithful pastor, he should not hesitate, for a moment, to grapple with the enemy.

It was in this point of view, that we discover the courage of the people of Salem Village, who were engaged in opposing what they considered the machinations of the Devil—they supposing that he was the cause, operating through the agency of Witches, of all the torture and misery they beheld, and

that, by their opposition, they were liable also to suffer from his malignancy. They believed, also, that the Devil was about to establish an agency, or kingdom in New England; and had actually commenced operations in Salem Village. This, Cotton Mather, Parris, and others, were determined should not be done, at least if they could help it. There was some very singular evidence given at the Courts on this point. Ann Foster, of Andover, a confessing Witch, testified at her examination, July 21, 1692, "that she was at a Witch meeting at the Village, where there was a large number of Witches present, and that the principal discourse at this gathering, was in regard to the setting up of the Devil's kingdom at the Village, and making it their rendezvous!" And another confessing Witch testified, at a subsequent meeting, that they had, by an unanimous vote, concluded to set up the Devil's kingdom at Salem Village—it being thought, all things considered, the most suitable place to begin the enterprise, and, by so doing, they were in hopes it would spread over New England. This was solemnly and religiously believed by many, and it required courage and pluck to stand up and resist the designs of a powerful, malicious being, capable, as they supposed, of tormenting them in various ways, destroying their cattle, &c.

Parris appears to have been very desirous of preventing his daughter, Elizabeth, from participating in the excitement at the Village. She was sent by her father, at the commencement of the Delusion, to reside at Salem with Capt. Stephen Sewall. While there, the Captain and his wife were much discouraged in effecting a cure, as she continued to have sore fits. Elizabeth said that the great *black man*, came to her, and told her, if she would be ruled by him, she should have whatsoever she desired, and go to a *Golden City*. She related this to Mrs. Sewall, who immediately told the child it was the Devil, and he was a liar, and bid her tell him so if he came to her again; which she did accordingly the next time the black man came to her. The Devil, it would seem, unaccustomed, in those days, to experience such resistance, and utterly astonished at the cool impudence of Betsey Parris, never troubled her afterwards; and,—although this girl was one of the first originators of the Witchcraft Delusion, in connection with her cousin Abigail Williams,—she appears to have had, afterwards, but little to do with Witchcraft. This arose in consequence of following the sage advice of Mrs. Sewall, in getting rid of the Devil; or, what was more probable, in her father taking her from the weekly circle of accusing and bewitching girls, and placing her in a very respectable family in Salem.



It has been said that Parris had a rival in Rev. George Burroughs, who had friends in Salem Village, desirous of his settlement; and that was a sufficient reason why Parris should appear at the Courts against him. We have never seen any proof of this rivalry between these clergymen. It is difficult now to ascertain the cause of the arrest of Burroughs who was preaching at Wells, at the time, in his pulpit. The girl who accused him of bewitching her, was Mercy Lewis, who was then living with Thomas Putnam. She formerly lived with Burroughs, when he preached at the Village; and, upon one or more occasions, he whipped her severely. This we suspect was the true cause of her crying out against Mr. Burroughs.

It had been said that Rebecca Nurse was an object of special hatred to Parris; but this we have failed to discover. We cannot imagine the cause of the alleged complaint of Witchcraft against Rebecca Nurse. She appears to have been an amiable and exemplary woman, and well educated for the times in which she lived. We suspect, from an examination of the charges brought against her at the Courts, that she had several times severely rebuked the accusing girls for their folly and wickedness, when meeting in their circles. In this way, she probably incurred the displeasure of Ann Putnam and her mother—her principal accusers. Mr. Parris has often been accused of being over officious, and a swift witness against the accused at the Courts. Parris could not be said to have been a chief witness in the prosecutions, although he may be said to have been a frequent corroborating witness with his neighbors. The chief witnesses were the accusing girls, as they were called. At the preliminary examinations before the magistrates, Parris and others were required to be present, when the depositions were taken down, as related by the girls, and afterwards made use of at the trials before the courts.

These being given in and related by children, and young persons, the Court required an endorsement from some older persons, who witnessed their supposed afflictions, and could attest to their depositions. It is in this way Mr. Parris's name, as well as his neighbors, frequently appear in the Court documents. Parris appears to have been frequently at the examinations of those accused of Witchcraft, and put questions to those on trial. He also acted as a recorder to the magistrates more frequently than others. The reason for his being often employed by the Courts was simply because he was requested to do so, and was discovered to be well qualified for that purpose. We have seen the records of several persons thus employed, and should say Parris's was the best. It was his practice to take down the ex-

aminations in short hand,—he being a good stenographer,—and then write them out in full, in a plain, legible hand.

We have not been able to discover the cause of the alleged complaint of witchcraft, against those three excellent women, viz: Rebecca Nurse, Mary Easty, and Sarah Cloyce. They were sisters, of a good education, and fair reputation. It is not to be denied, that the part Parris took in the trials of these women, was the chief cause of the opposition towards him, and led at last to his dismissal from the people at the village. His principal opposers were the relatives of these three unfortunate sisters. Samuel Nurse, a son of Rebecca Nurse, John Tarbell, who had married her daughter, and Peter Cloyce, who had married Sarah Cloyce. These three persons, together with one Thomas Williams, after the execution of Rebecca Nurse and Mary Easty, and the imprisonment of Sarah Cloyce, became much dissatisfied with Parris, and sought advice of the Elders in some of the neighboring churches, as to the best mode of bringing him before a council to answer for his conduct in the Witchcraft delusion. They were members of the Village church, and had for some time neglected public worship on the sabbath, and absented themselves from the communion. While these discontented brethren were considering what course to pursue against their pastor, Parris, either in order to divert their proceedings from himself, or to administer discipline, on the 14th of August, 1692, caused the church to be stayed, and entered a complaint against Samuel Nurse and wife, John Tarbell and wife, and Peter Cloyce, for absenting themselves from the communion. This complaint was entertained by the church, and brother Nathaniel Putnam, and the two deacons were chosen to be joined with the pastor to discourse with the absentees. Much time was spent by this committee, in endeavoring to obtain satisfaction from the offending brethren;—while on the other hand, they were striving by all the means in their power, to bring Parris before a council. At last, on the 16th of February, 1693, at a meeting of the committee of the church, the dissenting brethren gave their reasons for withdrawing from the communion.

“Whereas we, Thomas Williams, and John Tarbell, and Samuel Nurse, having a long time gone under the burden of great grievances, by reason of some unwarrantable actings of Mr. Parris, as we esteem them, and were proceeding in an orderly way, to obtain satisfaction from him, and had taken some steps thereunto, according to the advice of some neighboring elders. But obstructive to our proceedings therein, Mr. Parris and some brethren of the church, were appointed by the church, to de-



mand a reason of us, of our withdrawing from communion. The regularity of which proceeding, we do not understand, because in this case, we esteem ourselves to be plaintiffs and parties offended, and in an orderly way, seeking satisfaction, tho' hitherto denied. Our answer to the church is, that we esteem ourselves hereby prevented in our duty, which we account a grievance, seeing we were first in prosecution of the rule of our Lord Jesus Christ, laid down in Mathew 18 C., 15, 16 vs. Wherefore, if the church give us the liberty and freedom of attending our duty, as according to rule bound, possibly then further trouble may be prevented, or otherwise, the case will necessarily and regularly come before them. But if they deny us the request, we shall, as in duty bound, give the reasons of our proceedings to the church, or any others, when orderly demanded."

Parris says, in the records of the church, "that these displeased brethren were told in reply to their communication, that they did ill to reflect on the church, who, as also the Pastor, were ignorant of their methods, and that they should have spoken with the pastor himself, before they went to consult neighboring Elders. But to this last they pleaded ignorance. So we gave way to their request of proceeding orderly."

On the 27th of March, 1693, the dissenting brethren handed to the pastor the following document:—

"To our Pastor and Minister, Mr. Samuel Parris, of Salem Village, and to some others of the Plantation. We, whose names are underwritten, being deeply sensible, that those uncomfortable differences that are amongst us, are very dishonorable to God, and a scandal to religion, and very uncomfortable to ourselves, and an ill example to those, who may come after us. And by our maintaining and upholding differences, that are amongst us, we do but gratify the Devil, the great adversary to our souls. For the removal of which we have thought meet to proffer our present thoughts to your serious consideration, hoping, that there may be such methods propounded, as may be for the settling and confirming peace and unity amongst us, both at the present and for the future. And our desires are, that such a foundation may be laid for peace and truth, that the gates of hell may not prevail against it. And in order thereunto, Solomon adviseth counsel; and our desires are, that a council of elders may be chosen, to hear all our grievances between Mr. Parris and us, and determine where the blameable cause is. And we hope, that their wisdom and prudence may direct us to such a method, as may be for our comfort for both present and future."

Much time was spent by the committee of the church, in endeavoring to obtain satisfaction from the dissenting brethren.

ren, while the latter were striving by all the means in their power, to bring Parris before a council. At last, on the 16th of February, 1693, at a meeting of the committee, the dissenting brethren gave their reasons for withdrawing from the ministry at the village. They are the following:—

“1st, The distracting and disturbing tumults and noises, made by persons under diabolical power and delusions, preventing sometimes our hearing, understanding, and profiting by the word preached.

2d, The apprehensions of danger of ourselves being accused as the devil’s instruments to molest and afflict the persons complaining, we, seeing those whom we had reason to esteem better than ourselves, thus accused, blemished, and of their lives bereaved. Foreseeing this, we thought it our prudence to withdraw.

3d, We found so frequent and positive preaching up some principles and practices by Mr. Parris, referring to the dark and dismal miseries of iniquity, working amongst us, was not profitable but offensive.

4th, Neither could we, in conscience join with Mr. Parris in the requests, which he made in prayer, referring to the trouble then among us, and upon us, therefore thought it our most safe and peaceable way to withdraw. The reasons why we hold not communion with them at the Lord’s table are, because we esteem ourselves justly aggrieved and offended with the officer, who does administer, for the reasons following:—

1st, From his declared and published principles, referring to our molestations from the invisible world, differing from the opinion of the generality of the Orthodox Ministers of this whole country.

2d, His easy and strong faith and belief of the affirmations and accusations made by those, they call the afflicted.

3d, His laying aside that grace, which above all we are required to put on, viz: charity towards his neighbors, and especially towards those of his church, when there is no apparent reason for the contrary.

4th, His approving and practising unwarrantable and ungrounded methods, for discovering what he was desirous to know, referring to the bewitched or possessed persons, as in bringing some to others, and by and from them pretending to inform himself and others, who were the devil’s instruments to afflict the sick and pained.

5th, His unsafe and unaccountable oath, given by him against sundry of the accused.



6th, His not sending to the world so fair (if so true,) account of what he wrote on examination of the afflicted.

7th, Sundry unsafe, if sound, points of doctrine, delivered in his preaching, which we esteem not warrantable (if christian).

8th, His persisting in these principles, and justifying his practices, not rendering any satisfaction to us, when regularly desired, but rather further offending and dissatisfying ourselves.

JOHN TARBELL, }  
THOS. WILKINS, }  
SAM'L. NURSE." }

After the Pastor had read the charges against him, he brought forward his "Meditations for Peace." This paper, having been considered at the time as an acknowledgement of his mistakes in the witchcraft delusion, we have given it entire. It is as follows :—

"For as much as it is the undoubted duty of all christians to pursue peace, Psal. XXX IV. 14th, even to a reaching of it, if it be possible ; (Amos XII-18-19) and whereas, through the righteous sovereign and awful providence of God, the grand enemy to all christian peace, has been of late tremendously let loose in divers places hereabout, and more especially among our sinful selves, not only to interrupt that partial peace, which we sometimes enjoyed, but also, through his wiles and temptations, and our weakness and corruptions, to make wider breaches, and raise more bitter animosities between too many of us ; in which dark and difficult dispensations, we have been all, or most of us, of one mind for a time, and afterwards of differing apprehensions ; and at last we are but in the dark, upon serious thoughts of all ; and after many prayers, I have been moved to present to you (my beloved flock) the following particulars, in way of contribution toward a regaining of christian concord, if so be, we be not altogether unappeasable, irreconcilable, and so destitute of that good spirit, which is first pure. then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, James iii. 17th, viz :—

1st, In that the Lord ordered the late horrid calamity (which afterward plague-like spread in many other places) to break out first in my family, I cannot but look upon as a very sore rebuke, and humbling providence, both to myself and mine, and desire so we may improve it.

2d, In that also in my family, were some of both parties, viz : accusers and accused, I look also upon [as an aggravation of that rebuke, as an addition of wormwood to the gall.

3d, In the means, which were used in my family, though totally unknown to me or mine (except servants) till afterwards,

to raise spirits and apparitions in no better than a diabolical way, I do also look upon as a further rebuke of Divine Providence, and by all, I do humbly own this day, before the Lord and his people, that God has been righteously spitting in my face, Numbers xii. 14th,—and I desire to lie low under all this reproach, and to lay my hand on my mouth.

4th, As to the management of these mysteries, as far as concerns myself, I am very desirous upon further light, to own any errors, I have therein fallen into, and can come to a discerning of ; in the mean time I do acknowledge, upon after considerations, that were the same trouble again, (which the Lord of his rich mercy forever prevent,) I should not agree with my former apprehensions, in all points,—as for instance :

1st, I question not but God sometimes suffers the devil, as of late, to afflict in shape of not only innocence, but pious persons ; or so to delude the senses of the afflicted persons ; that they strongly conceit their heart is from such persons, when indeed it is not.

2d, The improving of one afflicted, to inquire by who afflicts the other, I fear may be, and has been, unlawfully used to Satan's great advantage.

3d, As to my writing, it was put upon me by authority, and therein I have been very careful to avoid the wronging of any.

4th, As to my oath, I never meant it, nor do I know how it can be otherwise construed, than as vulgarly, and every one understood, yea, and upon inquiry it may be found so worded also.

5th, As to any passage in preaching, or praying, in the sore hour of distress and darkness, I always intended but due justice on each hand, and that not according to men, but God, who knows all things most perfectly ; however, through weakness or sore exercise, I might sometimes, yea, and possibly sundry times, unadvisedly express myself.

6th, As to several that have confessed against themselves, they being wholly strangers to me, but yet of good account, with better men than myself, to whom also they are well known, I do not pass so much as a secret condemnation upon them ; but rather, seeing God had so amazingly lengthened out Satan's chain, in this most formidable outrage, I much more incline to side with the opinion, of those that have grounds to hope better of them.

7th, As to all that have unduly suffered in these matters, either in their persons or relations, through the clouds of human weakness, and Satan's wiles and sophistry, I do truly sympathize with them ; taking it for granted, that such as know themselves clear of this transgression, or that have sufficient grounds so to look upon their dear friends, have hereby been



under those sore trials and temptations, that not an ordinary measure of true grace would be sufficient, to prevent a bewraying of remaining corruption.

8th, I am very much in the mind, and abundantly perswaded, that God, for holy ends, though for what in particular is best known to himself, has suffered the evil angels to delude us on both hands; but how far on the one side, or the other, is much above me to say; and if we cannot reconcile till we come to a full discerning of those things, I fear we shall never come to an agreement, or soonest not in this world.

9th, Therefore, in fine, the matter being so dark and perplexed, as that there is no present appearance, that all God's servants should be altogether of one mind in all circumstances, touching the same, I do most heartily, fervently and humbly beseech pardon of the merciful God, through the blood of Christ, for all my mistakes and trespasses in so weighty a matter; and also all your forgiveness of every offence, in this or other affairs, wherein you see or conceive that I have erred and offended, professing, in the presence of the Almighty God, that what I have done has been, as for substance, as I apprehended was duty, however through weakness, ignorance, &c., I may have been mistaken. I also, through grace, promising each of you the like of me, so again I beg, entreat and beseech you, that Satan the devil, the roaring lion, the old dragon, the enemy of all righteousness, may no longer be served by us, by our envy and strifes; where every evil work prevails, whilst these bear sway James iii. (14, 15; 16,) but that all from this day forward, may be covered with the mantle of love, and we may on all hands forgive each other heartily, sincerely and thoroughly, as we do hope and pray that God for Christ's sake would forgive each of ourselves, (Matt—xviii. 21 to the end,) Coloss. iii. 12. 13. Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved,) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye—Eph. iv. 31. 32. Let all bitterness, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice,—and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Amen—Amen.

SAMUEL PARRIS.

Given to the dissenting brethren, for their consideration, at their request.

*November, 26th, 1694."*

Notwithstanding the discontented brethren continued to press the acceptance of their petition, for a mutual council. Parris refused to notice it, and says, "I put it up in my pocket, and told them I would consider it." It appears, by the records, that the acknowledgment of Mr. Parris was first read before the church, November, 18, 1694, in the presence of the dissenting brethren, when Tarbell remarked, that if the pastor had formerly made but *half the acknowledgment he now had*, it had never come to this. It would seem that the acknowledgment of the pastor was not satisfactory to the brethren, and they continued to persist in the calling of a council. In the meantime, Parris brought sundry objections, as he called them, against Tarbell and his friends, which were read before the church, November 13th. These objections, were as follows:—"Their precipitant, schismatical and total withdrawing from the church; Their bringing forward a factious libel to the pastor, consisting of calumnies, or reflections on said minister, and others of the plantation; their impetuous pursuit of the minister at his house, for answer to said libel to his great disquietude; there restless pursuit of the minister, on the 14th of April, 1693, for an answer to said libel; their persisting with great heat, that their charge might be read, yea loudly and fiercely before the whole brotherhood, clammouring against the church, and their publishing under their own hands, in divers places of the country, sundry oblequies against the church; their ensnaring several to join them in a petition to his Excellency and General Court, scandalizing the church and minister, as unpeaceable with their neighbors; their withdrawing their purses, as well as their persons from upholding the Lord's table, and the ministry; their gross mistake in their letter to the church at Malden, wherein they profess so much dissatisfaction with the doctrine, practice and administration of their pastor, for above a year, before the date of said letter, as that they were forced to withdraw from all public worship; whereas it is most notorious, that they were not wanting as to a profession of much respect to their pastor, all along before, yea, and a considerable while after the breaking out of the late horrid witchcraft." These are some of the charges brought against the three brethren by Parris, and he informs us, "as soon as the public reading of these articles was ended, Brother Thomas Wilkins, in a scoffing and contemptuous way, said openly, 'this is a large epistle.'" It would seem by the records, that the dissenting brethren continued to make strenuous efforts to bring Parris before a council, which was at last recommended by the pastors of the churches in the neighborhood, when Parris in his last attempt to



evade it, proposed to give the discontented brethren, a dismission to some other orthodox church, to which Tarbell replied, "Aye, if we could find a way to remove our living too." After a delay of more than two years, the church consented to call a council, who met at the village, April 3d, 1695. Dr. Increase Mather was chosen moderator, and offered the following report, which was accepted by the council, and presented to the church:—1st, They unanimously declared that "we judge that altho' in the late and dark time of the confusions, wherein Satan had obtained a more than ordinary liberty to sift this plantation, there were sundry unwarrantable and uncomfortable steps, taken by Mr. Samuel Parris, the pastor of the church in Salem Village, then under the hurrying distractions of amazing afflictions; yet the said Mr. Parris, by the good hand of God, brought unto a better sense of things, hath so fully expressed it, that a christian charity may, and should, receive satisfaction therewith. 2d, They advised the dissenting brethren to accept the satisfaction, which he had tendered in his christian acknowledgment of the errors therein committed, and in case Mr. Parris finds after all, that he cannot with any comfort and service, continue in his present station, his removal from thence, will not expose him to any hard character with us. Having observed that there is, in Salem Village, a spirit full of contention and animosity, too-sadly verifying the blemish, which hath heretofore lain upon them; and that some complaints against Mr. Parris have been either causeless or groundless, or unduly aggravated, we do, in the name and fear of the Lord, solemnly warn them to consider whether, if they continue to devour one another, it will not be bitterness in the latter end."

The recommendation of the council appears to have been satisfactory to the friends of Mr. Parris and the pastor was resolved to continue in the ministry. At the same time, the report of the council was unsatisfactory to those persons opposed to Mr. Parris, as it did not recommend his dismission; accordingly, on the 3d day of May, 1695, a paper, signed by 16 young men, 52 householders and 18 church members, was handed to the Rev. Elders, composing the late council at the village, requesting them to give Parris's case a rehearing, and more plainly advise the pastor to cease his labors, and seek to dispose himself elsewhere, &c. On the 6th of May, 1695, in answer to the opponents of Mr. Parris, the council sent a letter to the pastor, informing him of the extent of the opposition to his ministry, and advising him to come away from his present station, and unite in calling another minister, and forgiving and forgetting all former grievances.

Mr. Parris appears to have been nettled with the last recommendation of the council for him to leave his parish, and says, in the church records, under his own hand, that the paper (in answer to the instrument and *classical* letter from Cambridge) was brought by Deacon Putnam to the Elders, assembled at Boston, at Mr. Willard's, May 29th, 1695, being the day of Election after dinner, when was assembled the body of Elders, belonging to this Province. This paper was addressed to the Rev. Mr. Increase Mather and others of the Rev. Elders, which lately met at Cambridge, under date of May 20th, 1695, and signed by 53 householders and 52 church members, all belonging to Salem Village. In this letter, they say, that the removing of Mr. Parris from his present station will not unite us, in calling another minister. That they justly fear, should he be removed, they would be left, as a sheep without a shepherd. Therefore they desire, that Mr. Parris may continue in his present station.

The council appear to have been at last fully satisfied that Mr. Parris should leave Salem Village, and they therefore procured a parish for him in Suffield, and sent two messengers from that church, to persuade the church at Salem Village to dismiss their pastor. Parris informs us, in his church records, that at a meeting of the church, held at his house, June 3d, 1695, he acquainted the brethren, that here were two messengers from Suffield, who were looking out for a minister, and by the desire of some elders in Boston, made application to him, and was willing to go with them, if the brethren pleased, and in his absence for a few months, they might try if they could (with others, who now dissented,) unite in some other minister. But, after several hours debate, both with the brethren, and some other christian neighbors, they all declared an averseness to his motion. Thereupon thanking them for their professed love to him, he told them, he was not free to go, without their consent, and seeing they would not let him go, he prayed for them *to keep him, and make much of him*. The same day, June 3d, 1695, the church sent the following decisive letter to Rev. Increase and Cotton Mather, saying, "we cannot fault ye intendment of our brethren Sergeant David Winchell, and Corporal Victory Sikes, messengers from Suffield, sent by yourselves to obtain the ministry of our Pastor if we were so minded, as to part with him. But upon maturing together, this day both of church and others, to consult that affair, do hereby signify at the desire of the above Suffield messengers, with unanimous agreement, not one excepted—(save the four known dissenters) we are resolved—*God helping against such a separation during our abili-*



*ty to prevent it.* And our Pastor tho' otherwise inclined, yet as unwilling to leave so many of his flock, as testify so strong affections towards him. So earnestly requesting the constant helps of your prayers, and as much otherwise as you can, we rest, worthy and much esteemed sirs, your needy brethren.

SAMUEL PARRIS, Pastor,

in the name of the church and other christian neighbors.

To the Rev. Mr. Increase Mather and }

Mr. Cotton Mather, jun., Boston. }

It does not appear that there were any more efforts made by the Boston Elders, to bring about a reconciliation ; and it seems that there was always a majority of the parish in favor of Mr. Parris, remaining with them ; and there appears to have been a very general mistake, with many authors, in regard to his dismission from his people, they, supposing that he was hastily driven away from the Village. Whereas he continued and maintained himself through a ministerial quarrel of five years, until he saw fit to discontinue it, when he informed his church of his intentions.

There were three distinct matters of dispute between Parris and his people at Salem Village. The first arose previous to the breaking out of the witchcraft delusion, in consequence of the neglect of his Parish to furnish him with the stipulated supply of 30 cords of wood per annum. The second dispute with the four dissenting brethren of the church, arose in consequence of the course pursued by Parris in regard to witchcraft. The third, was in consequence of his claiming the parsonage and lands, under a vote of the inhabitants of the Village, and their refusing to pay him his arrears due him, on his old lists of rates. These three disputes, caused a long and continued quarrel, which at last attracted the people far and near—was a grave matter for learned councils, was brought before the County Courts, and was a subject for petition before the great and General Court at Boston. After it was understood that Parris was to leave the people at the Village, and that he claimed the parsonage, a fierce quarrel arose between him and the inhabitants, which was carried before the Court at Ipswich.

The matter, without being settled, was taken from the Courts, and given to Wait Winthrop, Elisha Cook, and Samuel Sewall, Esqrs., and they decided "that Mr. Parris should have some of his arrears paid him, also a sum of money for his repairs of the ministerial house, and be dismissed from Salem Village."

It was during his greatest difficulties with his people, that he lost his wife, by death. This occurred on the 14th of July, 1696. She was buried in the Wadsworth burial ground, in

Danvers, where can be seen a grey slate stone,—a fine specimen of the lapidary art,—with its lines as sharp as on the day when they were first cut, erected over her grave, on which is the following inscription, with the initials of Samuel Parris at the bottom :—

“Sleep precious Dust, no stranger now to Rest,  
Thou hast thy longed wish, within Abraham's Brest—  
Farwell Best Wife, Choice Mother, Neighbor, Friend,  
We'll wail the less, for hopes of the in the end.” S. P.

After his dismissal from Salem Village he removed to Concord, Massachusetts, where he lived in 1705; and 1711, preached six months in Dunstable. He died at Sudbury, February 27th, 1720; Mrs. Dorothy Parris, his second wife, died there on the 6th of September, 1719. The following are the children of Mr. Parris:—Elizabeth, who was married to Benj. Barnes, at Concord, January 13th, 1710; Dorothy, married Hopestill Brown, of Sudbury, 1718, and died March 4th, 1725; Samuel, who was a Deacon of a Church in Sudbury, died November 22d, 1792, aged 91 years; Noyes, graduated at Harvard College, 1721, was deranged, and supported by the town; Mary, married Peter Bent, of Sudbury, April 18th, 1727.

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#### ERRATUM.

On page 3d for *six* cords read *THIRTY*.

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Salem Observer Press.



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Account of the life,  
character of Rev. Samuel Parr-  
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